

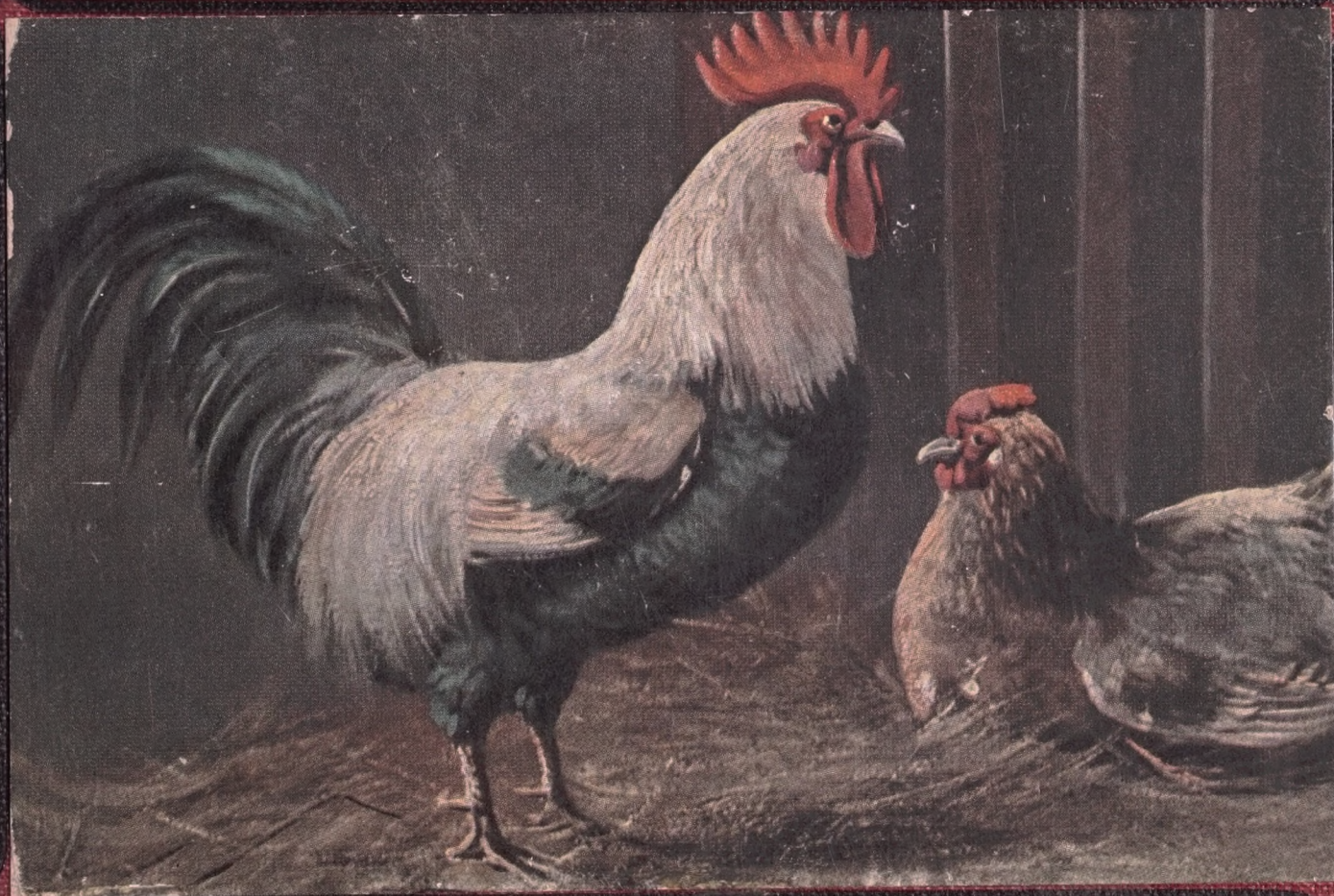
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DONALD'S GOOD HEN



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HE SAT DOWN ON THE BANK WITH CURLY COMB

DONALD'S GOOD HEN

The Nearly True Story of a Real Hen

By KATE UPSON CLARK
Author of "THE ADVENTURES
OF SPOTTY," "HOW DEXTER
PAID HIS WAY," ETC.

ILLUSTRATIONS By
W. A. McCULLOUGH

SALEM MASSACHUSETTS
SAMUEL EDSON CASSINO & SON

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
G. M. C.
WHO DEARLY LOVED HIS "GOOD HEN," AND
WHO TOLD ME THE FIRST TRUE STORIES
THAT I EVER HEARD ABOUT REAL HENS



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DONALD'S GOOD HEN

I.—A LITTLE CITY BOY

IT is believed by most people that hens do not know anything, and cannot be taught anything.

As everybody is aware, sheep and horses and cats and dogs have been trained to do almost human acts. Still, as I have just said, most people think that the poor hen is a hopeless dunce.

Now the hen which belonged to little Donald Burden was not a genius.

Yet you will see that she must have had some sense, or else she never could have done what she

did do. Donald says if she only could have been trained when she was a little chicken, she might have known as much as "folks."

When you finish this story, you may think so too.



DONALD

Little Donald lived in a great city, but one summer he went with his mother and younger brother, Oscar, his baby sister, Jessie, and Dorcas, the nurse, to board in the country.

They reached Mr. Corey's farm toward the close of a warm July day. That

night Donald had a great sleep, and he woke up feeling strong enough to do anything in the world!

Donald was six years old, but he was still

wearing kilts and a ruffle collar. (The events in this story happened some years ago, and little boys did not put off kilts quite as early in life then as they do now.) As for looks, he was a short, rosy, black-haired little fellow, with a very determined chin.

Dorcas dressed Donald very soon after six o'clock. He simply couldn't sleep any longer, though little Oscar and Jessie were still dreaming in their beds. As soon as he was dressed, he wanted to put on his hat and go out-doors. So Dorcas looked out of the front window to see where it would be safe for him to play, and Donald looked out with her.

Just under the window lay a large pretty yard, with flower-beds and a tiny fountain and a croquet ground in it. This yard was raised above the road beyond, and banked up by a stone wall. Across the road was a strip of rough grass dotted with

bushes. Beyond the strip ran a deep swift river. A railroad wound along the further shore of the river. Altogether, the scene made good Dorcas shudder.

"You can play in the yard, but you mustn't get down from the stone wall," said Dorcas.

Donald said the yard was not nice. (It really was too trim to play in.)

"Well, let's see what there is on the other side of the house," said Dorcas, and Donald went with her to the back window.

There were some large barns, and some small sheds and out-houses straggling off toward a wide smooth meadow, which was bordered by a stone wall with some bars. Over the wall rose the ridgy sides of a pretty hill, with trees standing here and there, and at the top were beautiful deep woods.

"I wish I could go up on that hill," said Donald.

Dorcas saw several sheep feeding along the ridges. It looked very peaceful and safe up there. Just then Jessie began to stir and to cry a little.

“Well,” said Dorcas, “you may go along the meadow and through those bars. Then you may go up the hill, as far as that big tree on that rock yonder ---- do you see it? Put on your rubbers, for the grass is wet. When you get up to the tree, turn around and come right back.”

By the time Donald was starting to cross the meadow, Dorcas had got the baby, and was holding her up to the window. Donald took off his hat. He had picked up a stick as he passed the woodpile. He perched the hat on the stick, and shook it at the baby. The baby laughed, and waved her little arms in return. Then Donald put his hat on again, and marched gaily along toward the pasture-bars, and Dorcas went off to give little Jessie her bath.



UP THE HILL

(If Dorcas had stayed at the window, she might have seen what happened next.)

Donald found the bars too close together to crawl between, so he climbed over the wall. Then he began to go up the slope. If the sheep had been cows he might have been afraid, but he did not feel afraid of sheep. He even hurried a little to get closer to the first sheep to see what it was like. Donald had never seen sheep much before. Sheep look very pretty and peaceful.

This sheep edged away

from him. So did the next, and the next. But the fourth sheep had its back to him, and was busy eating its grass breakfast, and Donald could almost touch it, when it lifted its head at last and saw him. This fourth sheep had been a pet when a lamb, and it did not move away. Donald smiled at it kindly, and was just putting out his hand to pat it, when a sudden noise, farther up the slope, made him look up. And there Donald saw a great sheep with horns, and this sheep was charging right down upon him!



DOWN THE HILL

Donald was no coward, and his first feeling was to stand his ground with his stick. But he looked at his stick, and then back again at the ram ; and the stick looked so little, and the ram looked so big, he thought he had better run.

“ Dorcas ! Dorcas ! ” he cried, as loud as he could, and raced down the rough hillside. And almost at once a sharp stone in the path tumbled him over, and tore a hole in his stocking and scraped a patch of skin off his knee. Yet there was the ram coming down right above him --- Donald could see him as he scrambled to his feet and ran on, leaving his stick behind him.

And now, just ahead, was the wall --- oh, how could he ever get over it quickly enough ! If only Mr. Corey, or the hired man, would come to the door and see him ! or if Dorcas only would happen to come to hold the baby up to the window again !

But nobody heard or saw little Donald. Nobody came out to drive back the dreadful old horned sheep.

II.—JEHOSAPHAT

DONALD'S breath was almost gone when he came bumping up, like a little flying scud, against the stone wall. Wildly he began to climb it, looking back all the time, as he scrambled up, at the big sheep with horns, less than a rod away. Oh, if only sheep couldn't climb walls! And perhaps they couldn't!

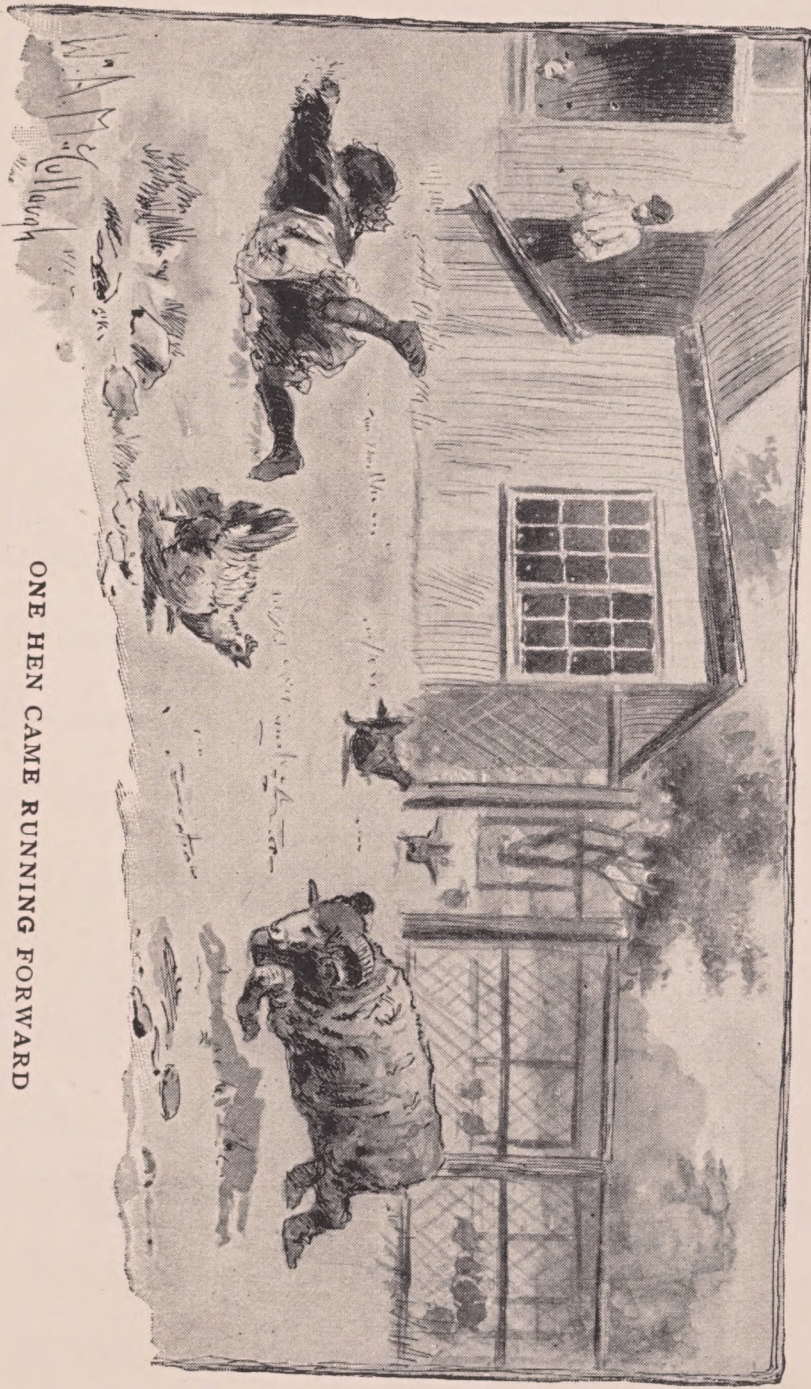
But Donald didn't stop to see. He just pitched himself, headlong, down from the wall. The next minute he plunged into a marshy hole, and sunk in,

almost up to his knees. But he pulled his little wet feet out and ran, ran like a little scared deer, giving a frightened yelp at each forward leap.

Sheep may not be able to climb over stone walls, but they can jump over, as this one showed. He did it, though, only after he had tried several times, for he was a heavy old sheep. And after he got over he plunged into the same marshy hole which Donald had tumbled into and he fell down, too, in getting out.

All this was in Donald's favor, and the little fellow moved over the meadow as if he were on wings.

The nearest of the farm buildings down on the meadow was the hen-house. It had a yard, with a fence of wire-netting. The door of the yard was open now, and the fowls were scattering out over the grass. Suddenly one group of them was roused from its bug hunt by a child in kilts who seemed to



ONE HEN CAME RUNNING FORWARD

be coming straight down upon them. There rose a great cackling and fluttering and scattering, but still on came little Donald, with the old sheep jumping along just behind, his horns twisting about in a very ugly way! And then happened one of the strangest things that ever was seen!

While the other hens were running and flying in various directions wildly, one hen ---- a large shining white one, with beautiful yellow eyes and legs and a curling bright-red comb ---- came running forward, straight toward the ram, with her wings spread, exactly as though she were trying to head him off.

In fact, this was what the shining white hen did accomplish. For she came on so steadily, and cackled so sharply and so fast, that she confused the ram and made him veer out of his course, and he was so very angry about it that he stopped stock-still and shook his bad old head at her.

Little Donald saw the scene over his shoulder, but he didn't stop running. Past the hen-house he fled, and then saw Levi, the hired man, carrying a pail of water into the barn.

"Le-e-vi! Le-e-vi!" he screeched, with the last effort of his poor little breath, and pitched forward in an exhausted little heap of torn kilts and bleeding knees and shaking little arms and legs, into the grass.

Big strong Levi heard the miserable cry. The pail of water went rolling down into the barnyard, and around the corner Levi came rushing. He saw what the matter was, and he took off his palm-leaf hat, and began to run toward the angry old sheep, shaking the hat, and throwing stones, so that he turned him back toward the pasture. But Jehosaphat --- the ram's name was Jehosaphat --- could not jump the wall going this way, and Levi had to follow him and take him around by the bars.

By this time Levi's shouts and the uproar of the hens had brought out good Mrs. Corey and Sally, the hired girl. They gave a great cry when they saw one of their little city boarders lying with his face down in the grass, and his clothes almost torn off him. But the next minute they discovered Levi driving old Jehosaphat, and they knew what had happened.

"There!" said Mrs. Corey. "I told Mr. Corey we ought to sell that old fellow if we were going to have children come here! I cal'c'lated on telling Mrs. Burden to not let 'em go up in the pasture --- but who'd expect a child to be out and up there the first morning before breakfast!"

Mrs. Corey was carrying Donald into the house. He hadn't fainted, but was moaning, and drawing long sighs, and seemed to quiver all over, and she left the breakfast to Sally and sat down with him, to rock him, and soothe him.

"You mustn't cry, Donald," she said to him, "for it will frighten your mother. Besides it's all over now, and we will sell that old Jehosaphat! He jumped the wall, and ran after me, once, Donald."

"Oh, did he?" said Donald, sitting up, and appearing to feel encouraged. And soon he said he would go up stairs.

(Mr. Corey put a poke on Jehosaphat that very day, so that he could no longer jump over walls; and in about a week he was sold. All the family said, "Good Riddance!" when Jehosaphat went off.)

Donald was able to come down to breakfast, and at table he told about his adventure. "And, oh," he said, "you should have seen the hen that flew at the sheep! I looked back and saw her go right at him!"

"It probably didn't know what it was doing,

poor thing!" said Mrs. Corey. "Hens will fly most any way when they are scared."

"I think it knew what it was doing," said Donald. "I think it meant to help me get away from the sheep."

When Mr. Corey heard how the white hen had dared to fly at the ram, he was much interested.

"She makes me think of a turkey I had once," he said. "I think the hen really did mean to hurt the ram, I think the hen understood that the ram should be stopped from chasing after that screaming, frightened little boy --- though if I hadn't happened to see this turkey that I speak of, I might not be so quick to believe that the hen was so clever."

"You see, I was going across my meadow one day, a few years ago, when I kept turkeys, and I heard a great commotion going on among a little flock of my turkeys out in the midst of the meadow there. The grass was quite high then, but I could

see that there were a good many turkey chicks out there, fluttering and racing about, as though they were scared. I decided that I would go near enough to see what was going on.

“ Pretty soon, I saw that a hen-hawk was sailing around just overhead, and every few minutes she would dart down toward the turkeys. Then the little turkeys would screech and rush for the thick tufts of grass and weeds, and there they would hide until the hawk was well up in the sky again.

“ Even the large turkeys would run away --- all except one particular one. She would fly up toward the hawk every time he swooped down and try to fight him ---- squawking and pecking at him as if she hadn't a mite of fear. I watched her for twenty minutes or more, and I never saw more pluck in my life. I believe, Donald, that turkey would have flown at the ram, too --- but I never saw any other fowl so brave. Fowls are a timid lot.”

“That white hen isn’t timid,” said Donald.
“She is the nicest hen I ever saw.”

“I guess I shall have to give you that hen,”
Mr. Corey said.

Donald’s tired little face beamed. “Oh, I’d like that!” he said.

“All right,” said Mr Corey. “You can have her. I give her to you now, right here. But you must feed her and look after her.”

And Donald promised that he would.

“What will you call her, Donald?” asked Mrs. Burden. “She must have a name.”

Donald thought a moment. “I will go out and look at her awhile, and see what name will fit to her,” he said.

After breakfast, Mrs. Corey mixed some chicken-feed, and went out to show Donald how to feed his hen. He found he could not feed her by herself, so he fed the whole flock. There were

about twenty-five hens and roosters, and about fifty chickens of all sizes. But nearly all were grey Ply-

mouth Rocks, and he had no difficulty in picking out his shining white one.

Donald decided to call his hen "Curly Comb." From that time on, he so petted her that she seemed to love him. She let him carry her about in his arms for hours

at a time. She often stepped along behind him all over the yard and meadow, and she would come sometimes and sit down where he and Oscar were at play.



THE SHINING WHITE HEN

One day a farmer, named Mr. Thatcher, drove into the yard. His little boy, Tommy, was with him. As Mr. Thatcher had to stop awhile on business with Mr. Corey, Mrs. Corey told Tommy that he could go out in the front yard and play with Donald and Oscar.

Often, afterwards, Donald wished that Tommy Thatcher had staid at home that day. And no doubt Tommy himself often wished so, too.

III.—CURLY COMB AND TOMMY

TOMMY THATCHER was not any older than Donald. But he was larger. His eyes and hair were hazel-brown, and he wore little trousers and a little roundabout.

Donald asked him to play croquet, as they were in the front yard. But Tommy didn't know how to play croquet. Donald did not, either, not truly, but he and little Oscar liked to drive the balls about with the mallets.

The woodbine on the house was in blossom,

and the bees from a neighbor's hives near by, were buzzing in the vines in swarms. Little Oscar didn't like "bumblef'yes," so Donald invited Tommy around to see the hens.

Curly Comb was out by the hen-yard, alone, by herself. Donald put down his arm, and Curly Comb stepped up on it and sat down with a pretty little nestle of all her shining white feathers. Donald had trained her to that. He never now had to pick her up.

Tommy looked on, with big eyes. "Let me take her," he said, after Donald had walked about with her a minute or two, and after Oscar had smoothed her wings with his soft fat hand.

Tommy came up, quick, to lift her up from Donald's arm, but Curly Comb gave a great cackle, and flew up into the plum-tree that grew by the hen-yard.

"She don't love anybody but Donny," cried

TOMMY LOOKED ON WITH BIG EYES.



Oscar. "She loves me a little, on'y jus' a little. You musn't touch Curly."

But Tommy said he should climb up and get her, and he began to climb.

With another cackle, Curly Comb flew down out of the tree, upon Donald's head. She often settled down upon Donald's head. Donald said it didn't hurt him any.

"Well," said Tommy, "I won't touch her. Isn't she fine? I wish I had her."

They went on, out by the little coops, where the hens lived that had broods of chickens. Tommy tried to take up some of the littlest, newest chickens and their mother did her best to get through between the slats of the coop and bite him. But she couldn't and Tommy laughed at her, and said, "Don't you wish you could?"

Then it was that Donald's hen showed again that she was a hen that would not see anybody in

trouble and fail to go to their rescue if she could.

Tommy was down on the ground with the little chickens, and they were peeping in distress, for he had three of them in his hands, and Oscar was trying to get them from him to give back to the poor mother. Down flew Curly Comb into the midst of the trouble, right on Tommy, and began to nip his hands and his head with her bill. She nipped him just as fast as she could, her beautiful head with its great scarlet comb darting at him in a perfectly terrible manner. Donald was scared, and ran and took her, and Tommy got up crying. The backs of his hands were almost black and blue, for a hen bites hard.

But Tommy wasn't angry at Curly Comb. He looked back at her as they came away. She was sitting on the ground by the coop, as if she meant to stay and guard the mother-hen inside.

"Isn't she a smart hen!" he said.



DOWN FLEW CURLY COMB INTO THE MIDST OF THE TROUBLE

Dorcas came out now to say to Donald and Oscar that a lady had come to call on their mother, and they were to go in the house to see her.

When they came out again Tommy and his father had gone, and Oscar went back again into the house. He sat down to play with his blocks, and pretty soon he said to his mother, "The wooster combs his hair."

"Does he? Who told you so?"

"Tommy did. He said the wooster took off his comb ev'ry-day and combed his hair."

Mrs. Burden said that Tommy must be a funny little boy, and that he only meant to have a joke.

Oscar shook his head. "I fink," he said, "the wooster does comb his hair."

Donald had not gone in. He was up in the apple-tree, where he often climbed to sit, with a picture-book.

From his seat, he could see the hen-house, and many little knots of hens and chickens scratching around in the meadow. He looked about for Curly Comb, but could not see her. At last he climbed down and went in search of her.

She was not in the hen-house, nor out in the meadow. You can see a white hen anywhere, if she is anywhere !

Levi was unloading hay in the barn. Donald hurried in there, and demanded of Levi, "Where is my Curly Comb ?"

"I haven't seen her," said Levi.

"She is lost !" declared Donald, beginning to cry.

"Oh, she will turn up before long," said Levi.

Donald went out and began to hunt again. Suddenly a perfectly awful thought came into his mind. He remembered that Tommy Thatcher said he wished he had such a hen. Perhaps after

he and Oscar had gone into the house, Tommy had carried Curly Comb off.

In a panic of distress Donald ran into the house to his mother.

IV.—DONALD GOES TO TOMMY'S HOUSE

MRS. BURDEN did not think that Tommy Thatcher had carried Curly Comb away.

Little Oscar, too, who was playing with Jessie, on the floor, shook his head. "Curly Comb would cackle," he said. Then he made believe he was a hen, to amuse Jessie. Little Oscar had learned to cackle quite well, and to cluck and crow.

Yes, it did seem as though Curly Comb would have cackled and struggled had anyone tried to

carry her off. Tommy might have found a box to put her in, and might have hidden the box under the wagon-seat, but Curly Comb would have made such a noise that Tommy's father would have heard her and asked questions!

But where was Curly Comb? Dorcas came out to help look for her, and so did Sally. And Levi left his work too, at times, and looked for her. Mr. Corey had gone away on business, to return the next afternoon, but Mrs. Corey joined in the search.

Donald sat up until after nine o'clock. But there came no news of Curly Comb, and Dorcas heard him sobbing after he had gone to bed.

Next morning Donald was up and dressed early. In the night it had come into his mind that Curly Comb might have strayed into the corn-house, or into the shed which Mr. Corey used for carpenter-work, and have been locked in by mistake.

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But no ! Curly Comb was not in either place.

It was a long hot day. About five o'clock, when Mr. Corey was expected to be on his way home, Donald was permitted to go to meet him. But by the time Mr. Corey appeared in the distance Donald had walked nearly two miles.

"What under the sun !" began good Mr. Corey, when he came up to the dusty little boy.

"Where's my Curly Comb ?" asked Donald, climbing into the wagon.

"Curly Comb ? Is she lost ?"

"Yes, she is, and do you suppose Tommy Thatcher carried her off ?"

"Tommy ? Why, no. His father has plenty of hens."

"Not like Curly Comb !" moaned Donald. "Tommy said he never saw a hen before that would cuddle down on a boy's arm, and do the nice things Curly Comb can. I think he's got her."

“Let me see,” said Mr. Corey, after a moment. “Oh, I remember. I didn’t see Tommy when he went. His father said Tommy had walked on a piece.”

“Yes,” cried Donald, “and while none of us were out there he put Curly Comb under his jacket and went away!”

Mr. Corey admitted that it was possible that Tommy had taken the hen. “But don’t fret, Donald,” he added, “I can get Curly Comb back, if he has. Mr. Thatcher will give me the hen. I will go up and see about it in a day or two.”

“In a day or two!” wailed Donald. “Can’t you go to-night?”

“No, Donald. It’s six miles up to Mr. Thatcher’s. Just be patient. The hen is all safe.”

But the very next morning Mr. Corey took time which he sorely needed for something else, and drove up to Mr. Thatcher’s with Donald.

THEY SAW TOMMY RUN AROUND THE CORNER OF THE HOUSE



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Tommy ran and hid when he saw the wagon coming through the gate. Mr. Corey and Donald saw him run around the corner of the barn.

Mr. Thatcher was standing in the barn, in the doorway. When he heard Mr. Corey's errand he looked astonished. But he said Tommy did bring home a hen. "Tommy told me that the little fellow --- the little fellow you've got with you here --- had given it to him," Mr. Thatcher said. "I shall punish him for this --- but that won't bring back the hen."

Donald gave out an agonized little cry.

"Why haven't you got her?" he shrieked.

"Well, no, little boy," said Mr. Thatcher, "I haven't. The fact is, your hen disappeared that very night. We looked everywhere for her the next morning. We thought that maybe she had traveled back to your house --- though I never heard of a hen smart enough to do anything like that.

But probably a fox, or owl, or something, was around and carried her off."

Donald could bear no more. He did not wish to cry before Mr. Thatcher and Mr. Corey, and he turned and walked back to the wagon, with the big tears running down his red cheeks, and climbed up to the seat.

Mr. Corey came, too, after talking a little more with Mr. Thatcher. He told Donald that he was afraid nobody would ever see poor Curly Comb again.

For three or four days Donald was almost ill. He wandered around the farm, always searching, searching, up in the pasture, and in all the sheds and barns, and in every odd corner.

After awhile he singled out one of the three or four whitest hens, and began to pet her. But she was not nearly so amiable and sweet as Curly Comb, nor so bright and intelligent.



IT WAS CURLY COMB

Donald Goes to Tommy's House 53

One Wednesday morning, just a week from the day when Curly Comb had disappeared, a very remarkable thing happened.

Donald had come out after breakfast, as usual, to feed the hens, when a big snow-white one came running toward him from the meadow, far in front of all the others. As she came nearer the building, she flew up into the air, toward Donald, as if to alight on his shoulder. Donald dropped his pan in a perfect tremble of ecstasy. It was Curly Comb! There was no doubt about it --- safe and sound and prettier than ever.

Oh, how Donald, and all of them, wondered where she had been, and what she had been doing! And, strange to say, they found out. You could never imagine what had been the adventures of this lovely hen. Even when they are related, you will scarcely believe them, though, as you will see, the account of them is strictly true.

V.—SUSIE AND CURLY COMB

THE Thatchers were surprised when they heard that Curly Comb had come back. They really supposed that some wild animal had devoured her.

Even Tommy was glad that the smart little hen was alive and safe.

And now everyone shall hear how it was found out where Curly Comb had been.

One day Mrs. Corey went to the village to visit her friend, Mrs. Shaw. Mrs. Shaw had just

come from a visit to a Mrs. Temple, whose daughter Susie, only a little older than Donald, was getting well after a long illness. The Temples lived on the road which led around from the village to the farm of Mr. Thatcher.

“I have the most extraordinary story to tell you,” said Mrs. Shaw to Mrs. Corey. “You know the cackling of geese once saved Rome. Well, a hen has very nearly saved the life of little Susie Temple.”

And then Mrs. Shaw went on to tell the story.

“You see, last week, when Susie began to get better she thought she could eat an egg. She didn't want steak, she didn't want chops. An egg was the only thing she could think of. There wasn't one in the house. They keep a few hens, but the hens have n't been laying lately.

“The Temples went to their neighbors, but they had no eggs either. Not an egg was to be

found at either of the two stores ; they would have eggs on Saturday --- not many, you know, are brought in at this season, except on Saturday.

“Susie is a sweet little thing, and she said it did n’t make any difference ; she could live on toast and tea until Saturday. Her mother knew she was very tired of toast and tea, and she felt dreadfully. Yet they did n’t see how they possibly could get an egg for her that day---Thursday.

“Now, Mrs. Corey, this is what happened.”

“Mrs. Temple was sitting by Susie’s bed, when suddenly there was a great ‘cut-cut-ca-dah-cut’ right in the next room---just as if a hen had laid an egg there. It was the back chamber, which opened right at the back stairs. Susie’s bed was against the door, so in order to get into the back chamber Mrs. Temple had to go around through some other rooms. By the time she had reached the chamber, there was no hen to be seen---but right on the bare floor was

an egg, newly laid! A few minutes later that egg was nicely poached on a slice of toast, for Susie.

“Friday forenoon Mrs. Temple went around and hid herself in that back chamber, to see if anything more would happen. About ten o'clock a big beautiful white hen came pit-a-pat up the back stairs, and into the back chamber. There she laid an egg again, on the bare floor. She made a great 'cut-cut-ca-dah-cut,' as on the day before, and then went down the stairs, and out into the yard with the other hens. Mrs. Temple watched her. She was a strange hen which Mrs. Temple had noticed when she fed the flock that morning, wondering where she came from.

“The next day Mrs. Temple bought eggs at the store, and the white hen did not go up into the chamber at all that day, and did not once go afterward. She staid with the Temples several days.

*The truth of this remarkable story is vouched for by the Rev. Addison Ballard, D. D., Professor of Moral Philosophy in New York University.

Then she disappeared and they have not seen her since."

Mrs. Corey asked more about the hen, and from the description of her looks there was no doubt in her mind that this wonderful hen was none other than Curly Comb!

But how Curly Comb found her way from the Thatcher's house to the Temples,' and from there to her own home, we probably never shall learn. Very few hens have been known to travel around in such an intelligent manner ; but, as even the most doubtful must be convinced by this time, Curly Comb was no common hen.

VI.— A TEMPERANCE LESSON

ONE morning the Burden family slept late, and it was consequently considerably after the usual time when Donald started out after breakfast to feed his hens. Then, with his big dish of “ chicken-feed ” in his hands, he marched off as usual, down the path toward the barn and the meadow, calling out in his clear sweet voice, “ Biddy, biddy ” over and over as he went.

Very few hens responded to his summons, and those walked strangely and limpingly as they

came. Donald's eyes grew large and round, and he paused in his calling, as he neared the spot by the barn where he usually fed the hens. Only a half-dozen or so were there. He could see a group further on, so he proceeded toward them, followed by those which he had collected on the way.

But what made them all walk so queerly? They even tumbled over now and then, and had great difficulty in picking themselves up again. As they walked, their feet would shoot up into the air, and they would tip from side to side exactly as if they were intoxicated.

Donald knew that diseases sometimes attacked fowls, and killed whole flocks of them at a time, and dreadful fears began to fill his mind. Perhaps all the hens were going to die! Oh, oh --- he hoped that Curly Comb was not sick.

But when Donald reached the spot where the hens were most numerous, he saw that they were all

acting just like those which were beside him. They seemed to be struggling to come toward him, but reeled and staggered, unable to walk in a straight line, and some of them fell over into the grass.

Donald kept on calling, "Biddy, biddy!" in a frightened tremulous voice, all the while searching for his beloved Curly Comb. At last she came out from behind the carpenter shop ---- and she, too, was disabled like the rest. Her strong yellow feet would claw the air unsteadily ---- and then over she would go into the long grass!

Donald was by this time so alarmed that instead of scattering the chicken-pudding in small bits, as he had been taught to do, he scraped it out in great masses, as fast as he could, and then started back toward the house, weeping and shrieking as he ran. On the way, he saw two hens run against each other and then angrily try to peck each other; but they could not "see straight," and their poor

bills merely dug into the soft grass, far wide of the mark at which they aimed.

This seemed so pitiful to the little boy that he actually howled, and by the time he reached the kitchen doorstep, he was in a panic of distress.

"What is it! What is it!" called Mrs. Corey and Sally, who had come to the door in alarm. They did not know but old Jehosaphat had returned.

"They are all sick!" wailed Donald. "My biddies are all sick! My Curly Comb is dreadfully sick. She falls over! She is going to die! Oh, get some medicine --- get some medicine quick, Mrs. Corey! O--o--o--h! O--o--o--w!" And poor Donald cried harder than ever.

"Sick?" repeated Mrs. Corey in bewilderment. "How could they get sick? Our hens have never been sick in the world. I'll go right out and see to them. There, there, Donald! Don't

cry so. I'll see to them. Curly Comb, too! Dear me!"

By this time, Mrs. Corey was nearly down to the place where the poor hens were trying to eat their breakfast. She clasped Donald's hand in hers, and tried to soothe him as she walked. Sally came anxiously along behind.

When she saw the hens tumbling around and acting so queerly, Mrs. Corey was at first as much mystified as Donald had been. As for Sally, she broke into a loud laugh when she beheld the strange antics of the unfortunate hens. This made Donald angry. He could not see how anybody could possibly laugh at those sick and unhappy hens.

Suddenly a great light broke on Mrs. Corey.

"Sally!" she exclaimed, "What did you do with those brandy cherries?"

"There! sure enough!" rejoined Sally, who understood everything in a minute. "You told me

to throw them into the river ---- but I was walking along with Levi, talking ---- and then I thought it would do just as well to throw them into the deep grass behind the carpenter-shop ---- and so I did. I never thought of the hens getting at them."

"Oh, Sally! You ought to have thrown them out into the river. I always do. You see, Donald," she explained, "I make a few quarts of cherry brandy every summer for the neighbors and ourselves, for sickness. It is excellent medicine for some kinds of disorders. I soak the cherries in the brandy for a number of days, and then I strain the brandy off and throw away the cherries. The hens have eaten the cherries and have had too much of the brandy which was left in the cherries. But they will get right over it --- just as drunken men get over their drunkenness. It is too bad --- but it is n't anything dangerous, Donald!"

Sally refused to see the matter in anything

except a humorous light, and she tried to make a joke about the fishes getting into trouble if the hens had n't eaten the cherries, but neither Mrs. Corey nor Donald would laugh at it, and neither would Mrs. Burden, who insisted that there must be something wrong about anybody who could smile at the spectacle of drunkenness in either man or beast.

But as the news spread, many of the neighbors came to see the poor tipsy hens, and as everybody seemed to be immensely amused at them, perhaps Mrs. Burden's condemnation was rather too sweeping.

The hens did not recover themselves all day long. They even had trouble in getting on to their roosts at night. But the next morning, though they were rather wild-eyed, and not as lively as usual, they were practically well again.

Poor little Donald did not smile once during that long day. When he heard the visitors saying

that it was "the funniest thing they ever saw in their lives," he felt sick at heart. It seemed to him very terrible. Mrs. Burden said she was reminded of the impressive story of Emerson's little son, who whispered to his father at the circus, "Papa, the funny man makes me want to go home!"

VII.—THE STORY OF PLUMY.

GOOD Mr. Corey was so sorry for Donald's grief over his hens that as soon as he could finish his work that evening, he took the little boy in his arms and sat with him out in the cool, vine-covered porch, telling him stories to divert and comfort him, while all the others sat by and listened.

“When my son John, who is now a merchant in the county town, was about your age, Donald,” Mr. Corey began, “he liked hens as much as you do, though he never thought of taming one and pet-

ting her, as you pet Curly Comb. Very likely we did n't have any such clever hen then as Curly Comb is. But he made a good deal of money out of the hens, off and on. John always had a turn for business. John has made a success in his work — and you will think that he was pretty shrewd even as a little boy from this story which I am going to tell you.

“You see Donald, the Sunday school wanted to raise some money. So each child in it was given five cents, to make what he could out of it. John took his five cents and bought a paper of tomato seeds. He planted them in a big box and he raised three dozen nice little tomato plants. Along in the spring, he sold the plants for fifteen cents a dozen. So he had forty-five cents.

“With this forty-five cents John bought a ‘setting’ of eggs. There were eighteen eggs, and I lent him a hen to sit on them. That was all the help

he had about it----and I considered that the forty-five cents paid me amply for that and the eggs, too. He raised sixteen chicks from those eighteen eggs, and he tended them as carefully as I could myself. He sold them for fifty cents apiece----and so he made eight dollars out of his five cents. I believe it was the most that anybody made.

“I’d like to raise hens,” said Donald very much interested. “I think I could take good care of the chicks, too----don’t you believe I could?”

“Certainly you could,” said Mr. Corey kindly. “But one has to be out on a farm all the year round in order to keep hens. Maybe you could do something quite as profitable in the city in some other line. We must try and think what a boy could do in the city in order to make eight dollars out of five cents, inside of nine months.”

“Have you told Donald about the dove down at the mill?” inquired Mrs. Corey.

“No, I have n’t,” said Mr. Corey, “but I will tell him now ---- for it is a remarkable tale. It is a perfectly true tale, too ---- for I saw some of the things with my own eyes, when I happened to be up at the mill one day with corn to be ground.

“You see, Donald, our miller, Mr. Forbes, is a pretty nice kind sort of a man, and he has a little boy named Luther, who helps around the mill. Luther is along about eight or nine I should say --- and there is n’t a better boy in town than Luther Forbes, I think.

“One day Luther noticed a dove flying around in the horse-shed at the mill and he took a notion to feed her and keep her for a pet. It was n’t a white dove nor a fancy-colored dove with a ruff around her neck, like some of them --- she was just a plain, common, dove-colored dove. You would have thought she was like any other dove --- but she wasn’t.

“Luther calls her ‘Plumy’ --- because he says she doesn’t drop down hard and quick, as most birds do when you feed them. She floats down sort o’ softly and gently, like a plume of feathers --- as of course, she really is, when you come right down to it, and so he thinks Plumy is a good name for her. Mr. Forbes told Luther that he had a dove once that he called Pete. But Luther said he thought Pete was a better name for a bull-dog than for a pretty little dove, so he would n’t call her Pete.

“When the weather began to grow cold last winter, Luther worried about his dove for fear she would freeze. Mr. Forbes had just built a new hen-house, and it occurred to Luther that Plumy might as well be out in the warm new hen-house as in the cold shed. So he took her up to the hen-house.

“Luther never thought that the hens would object to his pretty little pet --- but they did. They

pecked at her, and cackled and made all sorts of ugly noises. But Plumy did not seem to mind all this persecution. When they attacked her, she would just fly out of the way until everything quieted down, and then she would come around again softly and pleasantly, and snuggle right down against the very crossdest hens there were ; and by the time she had been there a fortnight, the hens began to seem downright fond of her, and Luther would find her snuggled up against sometimes one and sometimes another, seeming to love them all alike.

“Another thing, Donald. Plumy not only disliked to have them fight her, but she did not like fights among the hens themselves. Luther and Mr. Forbes agree that the little dove is n't afraid to go right in between the very biggest hens there are when they are fighting. And she flutters and moans and carries on so that she stops fight after fight. Mr. Forbes said once that he had heard a good many

times of the 'dove of peace' and all that, and he supposed that it was just a sort of poetical fable. But he says that this dove is certainly that sort--- and if we should study others as closely, we might find that all doves are more or less so.

"Last spring the flock of hens had become pretty well thinned out, for the Forbes sell a good many hens --- so they bought some new ones ; and at first there was trouble among them too about the dove. But she soon won them all over by her gentleness--- just as she had the others. Mr. Forbes says there never was a Quaker who was more for peace than this little dove-colored dove. You see, she is dressed like a Quaker, too.

"One morning, along in early June, one of the neighbors said to Mr. Forbes, 'There is some sort of a creature around killing the hens. Next door, they have lost seven good hens, and two of mine are missing today. There are bloody feathers all around

my yard this morning, and finally I found the bodies of those two hens lying out in the grass. This creature just sucks the blood of the poor hens and then leaves. It is a weasel, probably. You want to look after your hens pretty carefully.'

"Mr. Forbes thanked him and meant to follow his neighbor's advice. But that night bloody feathers were scattered all around his yard, too, and two of his best hens were missing. I might as well tell you right here, Donald, that two or three days after this somebody shot a long slim weasel, and there was no more trouble about the hens.

"But that day after the hens were killed, poor Luther sat around looking pretty sober. The bodies of the hens were not lying out on the grass, but the family were pretty sure from the feathers that the hens had been killed just as the neighbors' had been. They all thought a good deal of their hens, and they felt pretty sorry.



LUTHER LOOKED PRETTY SOBER

“Sometime during the forenoon, Luther happened to look out of the window, and he noticed Plummy down in the grass, biting away at it until she had filled her bill entirely full. Then she flew off toward the hen-house.

“Presently Mr. Forbes came around to the window and said, ‘Luther, have you noticed your dove? I have looked out of the window a dozen times --- and every time I have looked she has been out in the grass there, nipping it off, and when she gets her bill full she flies away with it and leaves it somewhere. What do you suppose she is doing?’

“‘I saw her too,’ Luther said, ‘and perhaps she’s going to build a nest. I guess I’ll go out to the hen-house and see what she is doing.’

“Pretty soon he came running back and said, ‘Father, you must come and see what my dove is doing. Mother, you must come. Father, have the men out at the mill stop a minute. Everybody

must just come and see what my dove is doing ! ’

“ Luther was so much excited that they all really did leave the house and the mill to go and see ---- and what do you think they saw when they reached the hen-house ? You could never guess. There was a row of box-nests all along the sides, and you could look right down into the nests ---- and there were the bodies of the two dead hens ! They had evidently had just strength enough left after they had been attacked to crawl back into their nests. But hardly enough of them was visible to show that they were hens ---- for they were almost completely hidden under a coverlet of pretty little bits of grass.

“ While all those people were standing there looking into the nest boxes, that little dove, without a sign of fear, flew right down among them with a bill full of bits of grass, and dropped them on the hens, and then flew off again for more. Mr. Forbes said it was the most touching sight he ever saw in

his life --- and it really made his eyes wet to tell me of it. As for Luther, he blubbered right out.

“Luther said he never had believed before that the robins did cover the ‘Babes in the Wood’ with leaves --- but he believes it now.”

“Is the dove up at Mr. Forbes’s now?” asked Donald, who had forgotten by this time all of the depressing things which had happened to his hens.

“She is,” said Mr. Corey. “You can see her any time you go to the mill.”

“Mama, let’s go up and see that dove tomorrow,” said Donald.

Mrs. Burden and Donald and Oscar really did go up the next day to see the dove, and Donald liked her so much that he wanted to buy her. But Luther Forbes said there was n’t money enough on earth to buy Plummy away from him.

VIII.—CURLY COMB AT THE LILY POND.

NOW Donald was not a perfect little boy, though so kind and good. For one thing, he had a tendency to wander off and be gone so long that Dorcas and his mother would grow anxious.

One day this “tendency” got Donald into trouble ; and had it not been for the interference of Curly Comb nobody knows what would have happened.

Long after water-lilies were gone everywhere

else, there were some on a little black pond on the top of the pasture hill above the meadow, by the woods. The water was almost icy cold, as the sun was shut off by the trees in the afternoon. The pond was about as long as a common city block, and about as wide as a common city street. It was not very deep, and the bottom was covered with a mass of lily stems and water weeds.

A small boat was kept on this pond. It would not hold more than two persons. Several times Mr. Corey, or Levi, or Dorcas, had taken Donald out in it, to pick lilies. But Donald had been told he must never get into it when alone.

One warm August afternoon, Jessie, Oscar and Mrs. Burden were all asleep, and Dorcas and Sally had gone up the river for a bath. Mrs. Corey was away, and so were Mr. Corey and Levi. Donald had been marching around near the house with Curly Comb closely clasped in his arms, and at last

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he wandered off across the meadow, and finally climbed the wall, and went up the slope.

Pretty soon he was sitting among the bushes on the bank of the pond. He thought he would count the lilies which were open. That morning he and Dorcas had counted forty-seven. There would n't be so many now, as the sun had gone.

He counted ten, and by travelling around the pond a little way he counted ten more. There was one spot into which he could not see, because of bushes which grew out in the water.

“If I should push out in the boat a little way,” thought Donald, “I could see into that place.”

He sat down on the bank, and put his chin down into Curly Comb's feathers.

(What he ought to have done, was to turn and run down the hill as fast as he could.)

“It was four weeks ago,” thought Donald, “when they said I must not go out in the boat alone.

Then I did not know how to row, or anything—but now, Dorcas and all the rest have taught me. The pond is not deep. I might as well go out where I can count all the lilies. Besides, I can pick those which are open to carry to the house.”

Donald arose and went to the boat. He worked at it with his one free hand, and pushed it partly into the water.

After about half of the boat was well into the water, Donald laid Curly Comb under the little seat, and told her to sit still there. Then he took up the dainty painted oars and gave the boat a push, as Dorcas always did

But now hear what Curly Comb did. Instead of sitting still as Donald had told her to do, as soon as she felt the boat move she flapped out from under the seat, with a great cackling and screeching, and hopped on shore.

“Naughty hen” shouted Donald. “When I



CURLY COMB DARTED OVER THE EDGE OF THE BOAT

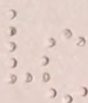
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tell you to sit still, why don't you mind me!"

He gave the boat a hard push back to the land. It slid up far enough for him to get out and catch the hen, though she ran from him a little distance. Then he climbed into the boat as before, and put Curly Comb in the same place and bade her not dare to jump out again.

The hen fluttered and seemed about to disobey him. But Donald put his foot up against her. She was not able to struggle past until after he had got a boat's length of water between him and the shore. But then the excited hen could not be kept any longer. With a screech, she darted up over the edge of the boat, and half flew, half swam, to the land.

Donald was angry. At first he thought he would go back and get her and make her mind. But he found managing the boat harder work than he had expected, and decided to let Curly Comb go, and row right out to count the lilies.

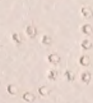


As he turned, he gave an awkward push, so that his hand slipped and let one of the oars fall into the water. He could have caught it, if he had tried at once. But Curly Comb was cackling and behaving just as she had in the boat, and he stopped to look at her.

Instead of stalking peacefully along the shore, as she usually did, Curly Comb did not keep still a single second. She cackled and screeched and fluttered. She flew up to the top of the bushes, and then flew down again. In fact she made such a hubbub that Dorcas, who was now home again and looking out of the upper back window, more than a quarter of a mile away, saw her, and was at once alarmed.

(Only the very tops of the bushes could be seen from this window, and this was the only window in the house whence they were visible.)

"That looks like Donald's hen — that white thing up there," said Dorcas to herself. "If she is



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up at the pond, he must be. He must have gone off by himself while Sally and I were up the river."

Any one can imagine what good Dorcas did then.

Donald watched Curly Comb only for a moment. Then he stretched out his hand and picked the lilies which were within reach. After that, he turned around to take the oar from the water and move on. By this time the oar had drifted several feet away.

He struggled to bring the little boat nearer to the oar, and after puffing and getting very red could almost reach it. He stretched far over, but the oar floated just beyond. He looked down into the water. It did not seem deep. He thought to himself, "I don't mind a little thing like wetting my shoes and stockings. I'll step out and just get my oar."

So foolish little Donald put one leg on the edge of the boat and was just going to step down, when

the boat, as most boats would, promptly tipped square over, and he was dumped into the pond, wheezing and gasping and screaming, and trying hurriedly to get his footing.

Donald's conduct now seemed to make poor Curly Comb more excited than ever. She dashed crazily back and forth and up and down. But such movements would have excited any hen. He no sooner got his feet planted in the soft mud, than he would become tangled in the lily pads and the weeds, and down he would go. Besides he was growing chilled in the cold water, and thought he was going to be drowned, and he screamed and cried in the most dismal way.

And what he was afraid of might have happened except that Dorcas just then came rushing up the hill. She must have come all the distance from the house in about five minutes.

(Dorcas did not get over that run for a week.)

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Ah, you should have seen Curly Comb then ! As Dorcas flung off her shoes and stockings and pinned up her gown, Curly Comb sailed all around her, flying up in the air, running away and then running back again, all the time uttering the most singular noises.

Dorcas waded into the pond, and seized dear little Donald, just as all the color was going from his face, and all the courage from his poor little heart.

That night, Dorcas could not say too much in praise of Curly Comb's conduct. She believed, and so did Donald, that Curly Comb would not go into the boat because she knew Donald was doing wrong ; also, that her screechings and flappings after she hopped out were a protest against his staying in the boat.

Mr. and Mrs. Corey and Mrs. Burden smiled. Mr. Corey said, " Hens always act queer if you

put 'em on water. If they hatch ducks and see 'em going into a pond they behave just about as Curly Comb did up there!"

A few days after this, Mrs. Temple, Susie's mother, called to inquire after the health of Curly Comb, and of course she heard the story of Donald's adventure on the pond.

Mrs. Temple saw Mr. and Mrs. Corey and Mrs. Burden smile when Donald said solemnly that Curly Comb had "saved his life," and she resolved to comfort the little boy, who also had seen the smile.

She said that she could believe any good thing of a hen that had attacked a ram in full career, and that had saved another hen's chickens, and that had travelled home by herself, after being stolen, many miles over a strange road, stopping on her way to lay eggs for a little sick girl.

Mr. Corey said it had "just happened so,"

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but Mrs. Temple and Donald shook their heads.

When Donald went to bed that night, he put his arm around his mother's neck, and said, "Please, mama, I am sure that Curly Comb knows much more than you and Mr. Corey think. And anyway, whether it was 'just happen' or not, she has been good to me, hasn't she?"

"Yes, Donald," his mother said, "she has."

"Then, mama," pleaded Donald, "please, please, don't ever downpraise hens any more! 'Specially, don't ever downpraise Curly Comb! You won't will you?"

And Mrs. Burden promised.

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